



LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Celebrating 26 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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Vice Chair

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Vice Chair

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Helen A. Kleinberg
Dr. La-Doris McClanney
Rev. Cecil L. Murray
Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Martha Trevino Powell
Dr. Harriette F. Williams

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **August 16, 2010**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Patricia Curry	Steven M. Olivas, Esq.
Ann Franzen	Sandra Rudnick
Susan F. Friedman	Adelina Sorkin, LCSW/ACSW
Helen A. Kleinberg	Martha Trevino Powell
Rev. Cecil L. Murray	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Carol O. Biondi	Dr. La-Doris McClanney
Dr. Sunny Kang	Stacey Savelle

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Curry at 10:07 a.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- **August 16, 2010**

Action Taken:

On motion of Commissioner Franzen, seconded by Commissioner Kleinberg (Commissioners Biondi, Kang, McClanney, and Savelle being absent), the agenda for August 16, 2010, was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- **July 19, 2010**

Action Taken:

At the suggestion of Commissioner Kleinberg and on motion of Commissioner Sorkin, seconded by Commissioner Murray (Commissioners Biondi, Kang, McClaney, and Savelle being absent), the July 19, 2010, minutes ([copy on file](#)) were unanimously approved with the following change:

Page 4, Second Bullet, First Sentence

In the summer of 2008, the Commission's Child Fatality Committee conducted an in-depth review of youth fatalities which revealed all youth fatalities **of five random cases of youth fatalities which revealed that many of the youth fatalities** consisted of crossover youth.

- **August 2, 2010**

Action Taken:

By common consent, and there being no objection (Commissioners Biondi, Kang, McClaney, and Savelle being absent), approval of the August 2, 2010, minutes was continued to the next Commission meeting.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Curry reported the following:

- The Commission will host its annual retreat on October 4, 2010. Commissioner Biondi is exploring the possibility of hosting the retreat at one of the locations of Homeboy Industries.
- The Commission will conduct elections at the meeting of September 20, 2010.
- Dr. Maria A. Prieto resigned from the Commission. In a note from Ms. Prieto, she thanked Supervisor Antonovich and the Commission for the opportunity to serve on the Commission.
- The Board of Supervisors and County Counsel will be notified of all inquiries or requests by a Commission Member for information and/or documents related to child fatalities.
- On August 17, 2010, the Board of Supervisors (Board) has an item on its supplemental agenda, ([Item 48-D](#)) regarding the Chief Executive Officer's request to the Board to direct County Departments to assist the Chief Executive Officer in the current inquiry related to the inappropriate disclosure of confidential child welfare information.

Action Taken:

After discussion, Chair Curry's verbal report was received and filed.

VI. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

1. Los Angeles County In Perspective: A Comparative View of Child Welfare Outcomes

**Dr. Susan Smith
Casey Family Programs
Dr. Daniel Webster,
UC Berkeley**

The Commission welcomed Ms. Bonnie Armstrong and Dr. Susan Smith, Casey Family Programs, and Dr. Daniel Webster, University of California Berkeley (UC Berkeley) who gave a PowerPoint presentation titled, "*Los Angeles County in Perspective; A Comparative View of Child Welfare Outcomes,*" ([copy on file](#)) and responded to questions posed by the Commission. It was noted that the data provided is based on 2008 statistics, unless otherwise noted in the presentation slides.

Ms. Armstrong reported that at Commissioner Curry's request earlier this year, she contacted Dr. Smith and Dr. Daniel Webster to bring forward a presentation to the Commission on a national comparative view of the child welfare outcomes. Analysis of the data collected reveals a significant decline in the number of children in foster care over the last ten years. Los Angeles County has the largest child population in the nation with a median poverty level of 12 percent, and there has been a direct correlation between children placed in foster and poverty.

Dr. Smith and Dr. Webster reported the following:

- Data from 2008 indicates that approximately 4.8 per 1,000 children are entering out-of-home care and approximately 8 per 1,000 children are currently in out-of-home care. Consequently, of those children entering or currently in out-of-home care, 12.6 percent are placed in congregate care and 34.2 percent are placed in relative care. These rates place Los Angeles County within the national average. Additionally, there has been a 16 percent decrease in out-of-home care for children in Los Angeles County.
- A comparative analysis of in care rates by ethnicity reveals that African American children are disproportionately represented among the twelve cities reviewed. In Los Angeles County, the in care rate per 1,000 children is 35, second in the nation to Baltimore with a rate of 42 per 1,000 children. Data also indicates that in-care rates for African American children were higher in cities where the overall African American population was relatively small compared to cities with a population that is predominately African American.
- Rate of children with an exit reason of "Death" per 1000 children in out-of-home care in Los Angeles County equates to approximately 18 children.

- The absence of additional maltreatment within six months of children exiting the system in Los Angeles County has steadily remained between 90-95 percent in the last ten years, 85-92 percent within 12 months, and 80-87 percent within 24 months. The number of substantiated allegations within six months of exiting the system has risen slightly too approximately 5 percent in the last ten years, 9 percent after 12 months, and 12 percent after 24 months.
- Los Angeles County has:
 - A 90-95 percent response rate for cases where an immediate response was required. While the federal mandate requires a 10-day response, DCFS has maintained a 5-day response.
 - Significantly increased caseworkers' face to face visits with children in care over the last ten years. Currently, about 95 percent of eligible children are visited by caseworkers on a monthly basis.
 - Experienced a decline in children entering out-of-home care. Nearly 20 percent of all entries to foster care are first time entries and re-entries account for approximately 15 percent. The length of stay for first entry cohorts has also steadily declined since 2001 for both children in relative care and those in non-kin care.
- The percentage of children in out-of-home care that are placed with some or all siblings has steadily increased since 2002. Additionally, children in relative care are placed within 1 mile of home which is 25 percent more often as opposed to children placed with non-kin. However, both percentages have increased since 2002. Placing children closer to their families facilitates reunification.

In response to questions posed by the Commission, presenters added the following:

- Timelines on adoptions and reunifications have decreased; DCFS' average ranges between 58 and 36 months; the national average is 36 months. In addition, case loads in Los Angeles County have continued to decrease in part due to the higher number of exits then entries.
- Currently, data is not collected on children that DCFS comes in contact with, but not entered in the system as there is no federal mandate to collect such data.
- Statistics presented on child fatalities consist of all causes of death, including natural cause, results of neglect, abuse, and suicide.

- DCFS is working in conjunction with Casey Family Programs to address Disproportionality through training workshops for Children Social Workers (CSWs).

Mr. Mark Tajima addressed the Commission.

Action Taken:

After discussion, the Commission received and filed presentations by Ms. Armstrong, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Webster.

2. Report by the Protocol for Probation Youth Fatalities Ad-Hoc Workgroup and motion to approve and send the workgroup's recommendations to the Board of Supervisors **Susan Friedman**

Commissioner Curry reported that she and Commissioner Friedman met with the CEO and Board Deputies to review recommendations on a protocol for reporting youth fatalities within the Probation Department to the Board, by a workgroup comprised of members of the Commission, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the Probation Commission.

Commissioner Friedman presented a draft letter with the recommendations to the Board that she will present to the Probation Commission for their approval.

After discussion, the Commission agreed to send the letter for approval by the Probation Commission. If the letter is approved, without changes, the recommendations will be sent to the Board. However, if the letter is significantly revised after review by the Probation Commission, it will be brought back to the Commission for approval prior to its release to the Board, as recommended by County Counsel.

Commissioners Sorkin and Kleinberg made a suggestion to revise portions of the letter ([copy on file](#)) to read as follows:

Page 1, First Paragraph, First Sentence

In December 2009, your Children's Deputies suggested ~~that~~ the Commission for Children and Families could be helpful by working with the Probation Commission to develop a protocol for reporting youth fatalities within the Probation Department to the Board of Supervisors.

Page 1, Second Paragraph, First Sentence

The workgroup reviewed procedures currently being used by the Probation Department, as well as, the draft protocol being developed by ~~this Department~~ **the Probation Department**.

Page 2, Third Paragraph, First Sentence

Since the majority of Probation Youth (nearly 19,000) are under supervision at home, ~~a cross-checking system~~ **a system which cross checks the names of youth** has proved to be the only avenue to collect probation youth fatality information quickly.

Page 2, Recommendation No. 4

Establish a log ~~to provide a quick overview, including cause of death, geographical location, age of youth, crossover status; log that is similar in nature to the fatality log that is kept by DCFS which includes, the Child's name, date of birth, date of death, referral date, Service Planning Area (SPA) Office, SPA number, Probation Status, Placement Type, Mode of Death, Cause of Death, Child Fatality Cause, Circumstances, Ethnicity, and ZIP Code.~~ Log should be reviewed quarterly and reported to the Chief Probation Officer;

Action Taken:

After discussion on motion of Commissioner Kleinberg, seconded by Commissioner Williams, the aforementioned recommendations and amendments were duly carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 6 - Commissioners Friedman, Kleinberg, Rudnick, Trevino-Powell, Williams, and Curry
Noes: 1 - Commissioner Franzen
Abstentions: 2 - Commissioners Olivas and Sorkin
Absent: 5 - Commissioners, Biondi, Kang, McClaney, Murray, and Savelle

VI. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In response to information received at the August 2, 2010, Commission meeting, Director Ploehn added the following:

- The DCFS mobile team has shown significant improvements. DCFS is committed to using new factors for data tracking to ensure safety for all children with whom DCFS has contact with. Child safety is DCFS' highest priority when determining removal of a child. However, the difficulty arises in determining projected future safety of a child. DCFS is working in close conjunction with Casey Family Programs to determining how best to access future child safety concerns.
- The consensus among the various child welfare organizations is that agencies are all moving from the 30 day to the 60 day timeframe in which to conduct investigations.
- The independent audit on all child services at the request of the Board of Supervisors will provide DCFS an opportunity to receive feedback from an outside perspective regarding their policies and programs.

- DCFS has been working with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to strengthen its assessments on the mental stability of parents. This has been done by co-locating mental health professionals within DCFS offices.

Additionally, CSWs refer information on the stability of the parent to DMH.

- There are several factors involved with the decision to remove a child from his/her home. A CSW cannot remove a child from home to conduct an investigation without detaining the child. In order to assess the situation, CSWs interview children alone, usually at the child's home. Often times, a child may be reluctant to verbally state that something is wrong; however CSWs can gauge the child's body language, tone and other non-verbal cues that suggest that is something going on.
- The Commission has the exceptional opportunity to take a strong leadership role and bring together the various stakeholders needed to improve and strengthen all child related services.

Action Taken:

After discussion, Director Ploehn's verbal report was received and filed.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There was none.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Curry at 11: 55 a.m.